

Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Incorporated

FEBRUARY 1997

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting :** Feb 7 Mr J Gregurke / Ms S Davison
Lake Wendouree Project (slides)
- Meeting :** Mar 14 AGM and Members' Night
- Excursion :** Feb 9 Point Cook Coastal Park : Mr L Fink
- Excursion :** Mar 16 Newlyn Reservoir : Mr G Binns
(half-day excursion)



President: Mr G Binns
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

Postal Address:
PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building,
School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard
St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Excursions commence from the corner
of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at
9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30
pm for half-day excursions.

FIELD REPORTS (December meeting)

Margaret Rotheram - early in November on the Colac Road near the Enfield Forest - a quail with 3 chicks ignoring the traffic on the road. Margaret had only a quick look and feels it was probably a Brown, rather than Painted Quail - particularly as the former is usually the more adventurous of the two.

Greg Binns - 2 young Peregrine Falcons at Devils Kitchen and a Wedge-tailed Eagle being chased by a Peregrine.

Alan Morrison - 2 pairs of Blue-billed Ducks on Lake Wendouree and thought to be nesting. Square-tailed Kites seen previously at Mount Cole were nesting again.

Stephanie Davison - a pair of Grey Currawongs nesting in her garden in Peel Street - soon after the young learnt to fly the whole family disappeared. Members suggested they would have gone northward to the bush.

Helen Burgess - Currawongs being chased by Wattlebirds in her garden in Moola Street. A Rufous Whistler calling all day in the garden.

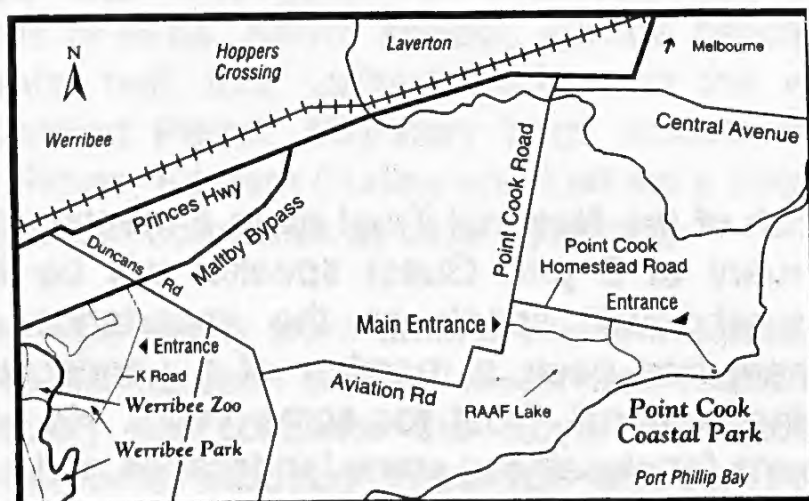
Margaret Martin - Eastern Rosella in a birch tree in her garden.

Frank Harrap - concerned about Army activities in a Sanctuary area in the Lerderderg River area west of Blackwood. Frank had visited the Wombat Forest and seen several Rufous Fantails and a female Rose Robin. Several Satin Flycatchers were heard.



DIARY DATES

Sunday 9 February: Excursion to Point Cook Coastal Park. Shallow coastal beach, fresh and saltwater wetlands, historic homestead. Meet at Book City corner 9.30 am or at the Park Office - entrance Point Cook Road - at 11 am. BYO food and drink.

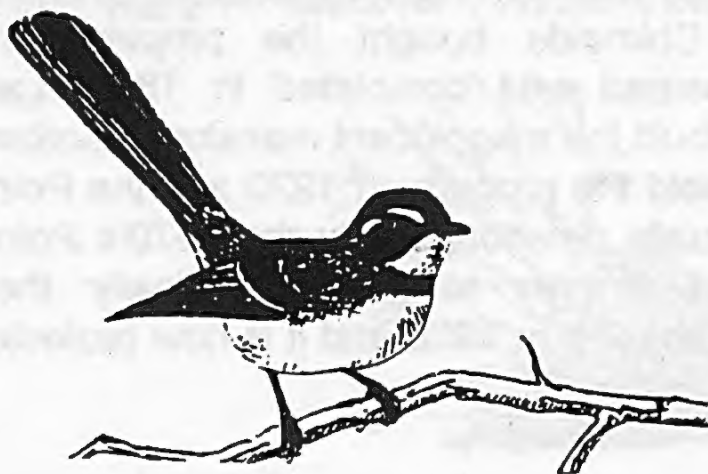


Wednesday 19 February: Committee meeting at [redacted] (Helen Burgess) at 7.30 pm.

7 - 10 March: VFNCA Camp at Howmans Gap Alpine Centre (Bogong High Plains) Details of accomodation, costs etc are available.

Friday 14 March: AGM. Please note the AGM is to be on the second Friday of the month.

Sunday 16 March: Excursion to Newlyn Reservoir. Meet at Book City at 1.30 pm for afternoon excursion and BYO picnic tea.



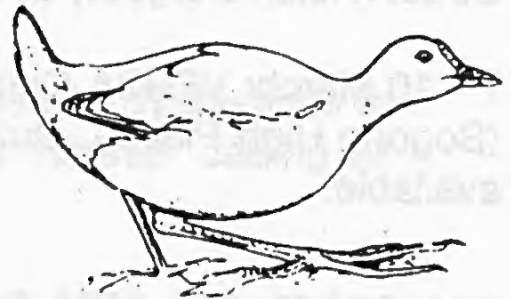
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held during the March meeting (see Diary Dates) for the presentation of reports, the election of the Committee, and the conducting of other business. Nominations for members of committee and office bearers are to be in the hands of the Secretary by Friday 7 March. Nomination forms are available at the February meeting or from the Secretary.

LANDSCAPE

The Ballarat Branch of the National Trust have a meeting on Monday 10 February at 8 pm. Guest speaker will be Mr Graham Douglas who will speak on the importance of Landscape. Graham has been a member of a Landscape Committee with the National Trust for some years. He will consider the reasons for classifying some landscapes and not others, some around Ballarat that perhaps should be assessed, and the application of objective methods of landscape assessment. The meeting will be held at the Ballarat Community Centre, cnr Sebastopol and Errard Streets. All welcome.

Enquiries: Greg Binns, Virginia Dyson



Point Cook Coastal Park

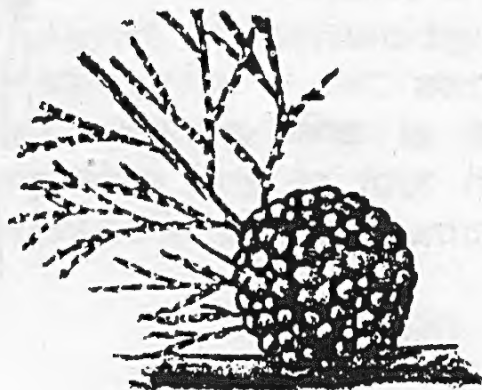
Point Cooke was named after John Cooke, the mate on board the vessel *Rattlesnake* which charted much of the Port Phillip Bay waters under the command of Captain Hobson (The 'e' was dropped later and the name became Point Cook). In 1852 Thomas Chirnside bought the property and the bluestone homestead was completed in 1857. Later the Chirnside family built the magnificent mansion *Werribee Park*. The Chirnsides sold the property in 1920 and the Point Cook homestead gradually deteriorated. By the 1970's Point Cook was empty and a prey to vandals. Finally the state government purchased it in 1978 and it is now protected as a

coastal park under the management of Melbourne Parks and Waterways. The homestead, stables and a weatherboard outbuilding are recorded on various historic building registers.

The salt and freshwater wetlands provide habitat for thousands of birds. Native species include pelicans, swans, cormorants, teal, ibis, various ducks and the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. Migratory birds include the Double-banded Plover, Eastern Curlew and Latham's Snipe. There is a bird hide and boardwalk at Lake Spectacle.

The Chirnside family were among the enthusiastic members of The Acclimatization Society which was founded in 1861. (The society later became the Royal Zoological Society). Other members included Frederick McCoy, Professor of Natural Sciences at the University of Melbourne, the botanist Ferdinand von Mueller, Edward Wilson of the *Argus* and the Austin family from *Werribee Park* near Winchelsea. In 1861, under von Mueller's supervision, numbers of songbirds were liberated in the Botanic Gardens. Amongst them were 18 canaries, 18 blackbirds, 24 thrushes, 8 starlings and 6 skylarks. By the end of that year the acclimatizers believed that the thrush, skylark, blackbird and probably the starling could be considered permanently established and more birds were introduced - chaffinches, goldfinches, greenfinches, sparrows, Indian mynas and the importing of skylarks, thrushes and blackbirds continued. Apparently several attempts were made to introduce nightingales but without success. (Refer: Kiddle, Margaret, *Men of yesterday; a social history of the western district of Victoria, 1834-1890*, MUP 1961 and Clark, Mary R, *Discover Historic Victoria*, Viking 1996).

VD



SLATY CREEK, CRESWICK FOREST

Excursion December 8 1996

A convoy of members travelled to the picnic grounds area of Slaty Creek in the afternoon for our final excursion of the year - a leisurely ramble followed by a picnic tea on a pleasant summers evening. The weather was fine but breezy, the bush was very dry, and the area encompassing the three picnic grounds was being well used by members of the public. In spite of vehicular and some firearms noises some pleasing observations were made including - Rufous Fantail, Varied Sitella, Eastern Shrike-tit, Yellow Robin and White-naped Honeyeater were observed feeding young in nests.

Butterflies were plentiful. Those identified were Crimson Brown, Caper White, Painted Lady and a Copper Spec.

Some nice clumps of Bird Orchids were found - some notable for unusually long flower stems.

A relaxing meal concluded the day.

GWB



METEOROLOGY - Gary Bradley

Gary's talk (December) was divided into four parts covering the science of meteorology, meteorological observations, weather forecasting and forecasting assessment.

In 1735 an English scientist, George Hadley, proposed a mechanism of air circulation based on the density difference between warm air and cold air. The Hadley cell comprises a circulation where less dense, warm air is rising into the upper atmosphere at one location (causing a region of low pressure) and being replaced by more dense, colder air descending to ground level at another location (causing a region of high pressure). On a global scale this leads to a system of low atmospheric pressures at the equator and at 60 deg south or north and high pressures at 30 deg south or north and at the poles. The main global winds blow from these high pressure regions to the low pressure regions. This simple picture is then complicated by the differential heating of land and sea and by the Coriolis effect caused by the rotation of the earth.

Observations of atmospheric conditions form an essential data base for any weather forecasting. Measurements include air pressure, air temperature, dew point, wind velocity, cloud type and extent, precipitation and visibility. Measurements are taken at stations on the ground and by instruments carried aloft by balloons, which are themselves tracked by radar.

Weather forecasting is a science which attempts to predict an essentially chaotic phenomenon. In this situation reliable atmospheric data is an essential input to a computer model of the region being forecast, eg Australia. The model comprises various levels of detail from broad at a global scale to fine at the regional level, such as Victoria. The mathematics of the model include as much of the physics of meteorology as practicable for the region, the mathematics is calibrated to explain the current atmospheric situation and is then extrapolated to predict situations from one to four days hence. This is extrapolation is described in standard terms as the weather forecast.

Order Rodentia.

1. Aquatic Rats Tribe HYDROMYINI.

The predominantly New Guinea Hydromyini (about 10 species in N.G. 2 in Australia) are often found in damp habitats. They have sleek bodies and water repellant fur, water rats have webbed feet but the feet of the smaller false water rat are unwebbed, both are predators which capture most of their food in fresh or brackish water. In addition to their adaption to aquatic life, species of Hydromyini differ from other native rodents in possessing two (rather than three) molars in each tooth row.

2. Tribe UROMYINI.

There are 5 species in Australia none come near Victoria.

Tribe CONILURINI,

Predominantly Australian, there are 8 Genera and 40 species, 12 in N.G. The only Victorian species is the extinct White Footed Rabbit Rat, although long extinct there are 2 specimen in the National Museum Melbourne. Jhon Gould's notes written more than a century ago are still the best information available. They ranged from just into Queensland and around the East coast into South Australia.

"New Endemic" Rodents Sub Family MURIDAE.

7 species of rat belong to the same genus, Rattus, 3 introduced Black, Brown and the house mouse arrived in Australia much later than the stock that gave rise to the Hydromyini, they are therefore known as the "New Endemic" species. These 3 belong To the genus Rattus also,

Females of the Rattus species have 6 to 12 nipples (4 to the Hydromyini, except Pogomys which has 6.)

Pogonomys Prehensile Tailed Rats are a N.G. species with one in North Queensland evidence indicates it is amember of Hydromyinae. If this is so it must be fitted into a tribe separate from, but equivilant to the "old endemics" but such a tribe is not yet established.

Elfin